DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 095 587 CS 500 730

AUTHOR Striegel, Quincalee Brown
TITLE Working in the Women's Movement.
PUB DATE Mar 74
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (Washington, D.C., March 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Career Opportunities; Careers; *Communication (Thought Transfer); Communication Skills; Community Organizations; Composition (Literary); *Feminism; *Information Dissemination; Persuasive Discourse; Public Speaking; Research; *Speech; Working Women

ABSTRACT

Activity within the feminist movement, while greatly productive and involving many women, offers limited career opportunities in a paid capacity. However, for women who are trained in speech communication but who do not want to teach, Commissions on the Status of Women (state and county) do provide some paid employment utilizing speech skills in basic research, information and referral services, public speaking and persuasion, and written communications of various types. Although rewarding paid work within the movement is available for the speech trained woman, now is the time when more jobs should be created and pursued on the city, county, state, and national levels. (JM)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Quincalee Brown Striegel
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

ED 095587

WORKING IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Quincalee Brown Striegel

A Paper Presented To

Eastern Communication Association

Convention - March 21 - 23, 1974

That there is an enormous amount of activity within the Feminist Movement, is, by now a foregone conclusion. All one need do is to examine the productivity generated by the national organizations that are working on "women's issues" to realize not only the scope of the effort, but also the numbers of women involved. Now on the surface, it might appear that this movement would be a boon to the woman in speech communication who either cannot find a teaching job that she likes or who perhaps just prefers some other type of work. While there no question but that the feminist movement has opened the doors for women in innumerable fields and vocations, working within the movement in any type of career or paid capacity is another story.

The first thing that I should like to do then, is to take a more realistic look at the career opportunity within the movement. To begin with, it goes without saying that most of the vast amounts of work done are volunteer. In looking at the large women's organization such as NOW, WEAL, FEW, BPW, LWV and the various Commissions on the Status of Women, I would estimate that fully 95% of the work done is on a volunteer basis, this being true even when several of these groups have strong stands against "volunteerism." (They

CS 500 730

do, of course draw a distinction between the traditional type of "busy-work" volunteerism and volunteerism for political action.) There is no question but that there is plenty of work that needs to be done in any of those organizations which will fill any spare moment you may have. If, however, it is a paid employment you seek, the outlook is not so bright.

A second thing that needs to be realized about jobs within the movement, is that some of them are seriously underpaid and at the same time are very demanding in terms of the time one is expected to put in. When you are working with volunteers or, as in my case, for a Commission composed of volunteers, it means that all meetings are held in the evenings - so not only are you expected to put in a full day's work, you will find that two to three evenings a week are full and usually one Saturday a month has some conference that should be attended. In terms of salary, the range from $9.000.00 to perhaps $12,000.00 would seem to be the average. There are some exceptions to this, but they are few and far between.

Recently, for example, I visited with Mary Vogel, who is the Office Manager of the NOW Legislative Office in D.C. She is currently the only paid staff there and is expected to do virtually everything - from research, writing, typing, duplicating to phone answering. Being the typical "jill of all trades" helps a lot when you are involved in women's work in any capacity it would seem. Recently, NOW has advertised for a Legislative Assistant and lobbyist - salary at $13,200.00, which doesn't sound bad on the surface. Under the surface it needs to be realized that that salary would have to support

you in an area where a one bedroom apartment - in relatively decent condition - will cost you upwards of $250.00 a month and where the cost of living in general is the second highest in the country. Also compare it to the fact that an average salary for a lobbyist for any small business or industry begins at $60,000.00 per year - and you can see the discrepancy. On top of the money issue, remember that you will be expected to work 10 hours per day minimum, most evenings during the week and probably most weekends. Of course, on the other hand there is a certain amount of excitment and glamour attached to such a job, but never fool yourself about the detriments.

The other thing that soon becomes obvious when you examine employment in the women's movement is that women - as a class have just not reached the place where they can afford to pay properly for real talent. There will hopefully be a time when that is so, but it is certainly not now. Currently, most of the large national organizations have some paid clerical staff (WEAL), FEW has a part-time Executive Director and some of them pay part of the expenses for the national officers or national board members, and that is about it. In sum then, the outlook does not seem to bright for the time being.

Let me turn now to the area with which I am most familiar - Commissions on the Status of Women. Currently there are 49 State Commissions (only Texas does not have one), 24 Municipal Commissions, 10 County Commissions the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. (These were as of August 1973.) A quick look at the funding of these Commissions will give us a guess as to the type

of possible paid employment available. In January of 1973, the Department of Labor, Women's Bureau sent a questionnaire to the Commissions requesting information concerning funding. Fifty-six replied as follows: (All are per-year.)

17 - receive no funds at all

10 - receive between $1,000.00 and $4,900.00

7 - receive between $5,000.00 and $5,900.00

5 - receive between $10,000.00 and $19,000.00

2 - receive between $20,000.00 and $29,000.00

4 - receive between $30,000.00 and $39,000.00

3 - receive between $40,000.00 and $49,000.00

1 - receives between $50,000.00 and $59,000.00

1 - receives between $60,000.00 and $69,000.00

Of those reporting, but unable to tell exact funds were 6 Commissions. These usually had money grated from such things as the "Mayor's Budget" or the "County Commission's Budget."

It would be a safe assumption that for the 39 Commissions with a budget of $20,000.00 or less, there are no adequately paid, full time jobs. They probably have some clerical help and expenses for such things as printing, research and perhaps reimbursement for certain expenses encountered by their Commissioners, but that would be it.

Considering the grim outlook presented so far, it could be said that I am lucky to have found employment with one of the well funded and staffed Commissions. In Montgomery County, there is a volunteer, appointed Commission of fifteen persons. Then there is a staff of three persons who work in two ways:

first, as a County Agency which is housed, equipped and supported quite adequately by the County and second, as the staff of the Commission who works at the direction of the Commission on their various projects. Currently the staff consists of three persons: an Executive Secretary, an Administrative Assistant and a Clerk-Typist. If the proposed budget is confirmed by the County Council, we will have three positions added next year, two professional positions as Information and Referral Specialists and another Clerk-Typist.

With this as some background as to the make-up of our office, perhaps it would be helpful for me to describe the various kinds of work we perform and also indicate just how a background in Speech Communications has been invaluable in our work.

A good deal of our time is spent in research which is not terribly different from academic research. In the last six months of the operation of the permanent staff, our office has researched such issues as:

1. Institutional response to victims of sexual assault. As Agency representative to the Commission sponsered Sexual Offense Committee, I have helped with research in such areas as police, hospital, courts, counseling, education and victims.
2. Domestic relations law, court proceedure in domestic relations cases and legal representation for women in such cases.
3. Credit discrimination in the areas of apartmental rental, retail credit, mortgage loans, general loans and loans for purchase of automobiles.

4. Housing discrimination, emergency housing for victims of eviction and assistance with finding moderate cost housing.

5. Equal Employment Opportunity law and Affirmative Action requirements. Study in this area included a course at Georgetown University which covered all the legislation in that vast and complicated area of legal requirements.

6. Employment discrimination which has encompassed everything from a person being rejected from employment because she is a woman, to women being fired because "the bosses wife doesn't want a woman to work here," to women being fired because they were pregnant.

7. School curriculum studies including the County's proposed sex-education curriculum to sex role stereotyping in text-books.

8. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and in particular the funding of boy's and girl's athletic programs in the County. And finally

9. Legislative research covering many of the above mentioned areas; i.e. housing, fair employment, credit, penalty for rape, etc.

It should be clear then that basic research skills are invaluable in work in the feminist movement. Since it is such a new field, there is still an enormous amount of research work to be done.

A second important skill would be related to the Speech Communication area of Interpersonal Communication. Our office runs an Information and Referral Service for all women in the County who have any type of problem, want to express any kind of concern or who have been unfairly or illegally treated. No

matter what the question or how bizzar the problem, it is essential to realize that these women need most of all to be heard without judgment and then need to be helped in any way possible. Frequently there is a clear answer to the question, or the person can be told specifically where to go to find assistance. But more often than we would have realized, there is no real answer - at least not one that we could ever provide. You soon come to realize that many of these women are calling out of a sense of desperation, out of a very real need for someone to just hear them, and be concerned for them. On more than one occasion a woman has said "you are the first person who has ever listened to this story without telling me I was silly," or "it is so good to talk to someone who sympathizes with my situation," or "your listening to me has given me the strength to go on."

Frequently the stories seem imaginary at best, absurd at worst, but the thing that must always be remembered is that the problem and its pain are terribly real to that woman and any attempt you can make to share that pain or that problem with her, may make a difference in her ability to cope with the realities of her particular existence. While an understanding of Interpersonal Communications can assist with this ability to listen, it must be accompanied by a genuine concern for the problems, frustrations, fears and rage that many women are beginning to express. You must care about other women in order to communicate with them on this level.

A third Speech Communication skill that is helpful in the women's movement is Public Speaking - the good old basic speech

and persuasion course. We also run a Speaker's Bureau through our office and we will speak to any group desiring to know about us, our work or any of the issues of the women's movement. Currently we average about one speaking performance per-week, but as our service has become better known, this rate has been picking up.

Since there is much about the women's movement that is still shrouded in mystery and ignornance for larger numbers of the population than we care to think about, it is essential that we get our message to as many of them as possible. Thus the art of "gentle persuasion" is invaluable in the very basic process of attitude change.

Along with giving speeches, talks and panel presentations, we also testify before legislative committees or councils on pending bills. Usually this work is done by our Commissioners, but the testifying for legislation has to be one of the most effective ways of affecting the lives and ultimately the attitudes of large numbers of people.

The final form of Communication (and I guess it depends upon your point of view as to whether it is Speech Communication or not) is Written. We are constantly writing testimony, letters, reports, newsletter, brochures, press releases, special interest stories and budget justifications. It is certain that much of what other people know about you they receive through written communication, and the ability to write quickly, clearly and logically can be a great asset as well as a time saver.

As should be apparent by now, training in Speech Communication is one of the very best possible foundations for work in

the movement. The next step then seems to be the generation of more good jobs within the movement. In fact, this may be a possibility. New Commissions are being established all the time and perhaps with some of the funded and staffed ones as examples, others will follow with the necessary financial support. If no Commission exists in your city or county, it is possible for you and a few others to see the Mayor or the County Commission and ask that one be appointed. You may not get much at first, but it is possible that with work, it could at a later date be funded for full-time or even good part-time employment. Of course, there will be an element of risk in this, no one can guarentee what elected officials will do, but certainly 1974 is a ripe time for such a move.

Certainly too, it can be argued that volunteer work in the movement is an excellent training ground for employment. A broad understanding of the issues and the research is helpful, and the current sentiment for women being able to use volunteer experience in a resume gives added weight to such effort.

Given the lack of jobs actually connected with the movement, if I were considering non-teaching employment, I imagine I would start with EEO and Affirmative Action positions with business, industry, schools and with the government. Also, I would seriously look into such employment in state and local governments. One of the great advantages of the women's movement, is the number of positions that have opened up in all these areas.

In summary, I would say that working within the feminist

movement can be most rewarding, the work is constantly varying, you have the opportunity to meet and know every imaginable type of person and, most of all, you have the knowledge that in what you do you are somehow making life better or easier or more "just" for large numbers of your sisters. It is certainly a small way to effect the course of history and that in itself is an exciting prospect.

Even though I have perhaps not painted an optimistic picture, do not be disillusioned. There are jobs there, working for and with women in virtually all parts of the economy. It may take work in digging them out, but be comforted that your discipline has prepared you well. All that is needed now is a little luck.

Quincalee Brown Striegel